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COLORADO:

Residents near gold mine blowout wary of Superfund

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The first meeting of a local group to take place since the Gold King mine blowout was dominated by discussion of whether the mine should be designated as a Superfund site.

About 100 people at the meeting of the Animas River Stakeholders Group in Silverton, Colo., yesterday disagreed about whether a Superfund designation would help or hinder the area.

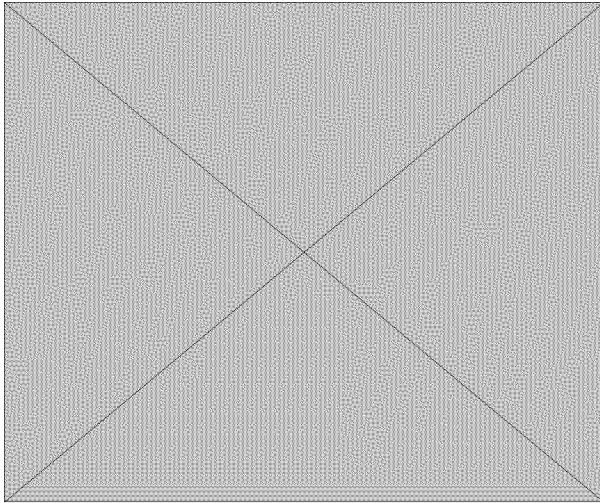
No one from U.S. EPA was present, but the agency was frequently mentioned.

Some residents said a Superfund designation -- which would allow EPA to recoup costs from "parties it deems responsible" -- would be too broad and that they would prefer direct action from Congress.

Other residents argued that it would be unaffordable to clean up the area without the Superfund program.

San Juan County Commissioner Scott Fetchenier said a previous \$10 million cleanup offer from Sunnyside Gold Corp. was worth considering if the money could be used immediately, instead of a "ponderous" process of waiting to see who is found responsible. The \$10 million offer would be withdrawn if the mine became a Superfund site, Fetchenier said, though Durango Mayor Dean Brookie noted that the company's liability is likely far higher than \$10 million.

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Mining companies "will have to be brought to bare and pay," said Travis Stills, an attorney with Energy & Conservation Law in Durango (Chase Olivarius-Mcallister, *Durango Herald*, Aug. 25). -- SP

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